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A Model Confederate Soldier,

BEING A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE REV. NATHANIEL D. RENFROE, LIEUTENANT OF A COMPANY IN THE FIFTH ALABAMA BATTALION, OF GEN. A. P. HILL'S DIVISION, WHO FELL IN THE BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG, DECEMBER 13TH, 1862.

BY THE

REV. J. J. D. RENFROE.

"Be thou of good courage, and let us pray the more for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth him good."—II *Sam.* 10: 12.

[PREFATORY NOTE.—It is hoped that the following sketch of the Rev. N. D. RENFROE will be read with interest and profit by many of our gallant soldiers who are now battling for our homes, our country, our liberties. Such examples of devotion to religion and patriotism ought to be preserved for the benefit of the living. The withdrawal of one so young, so pure, so gifted, from a sphere of usefulness to which the Master had called him, is certainly a mysterious providence. It is fitting that some memorial of departed worth should remain to fill the void. And who can more appropriately perform this melancholy task than a surviving brother? We shall be greatly mistaken if the reading of this tract does not cause many a soldier's heart to thrill with still higher emotions of patriotic sympathy and Christian devotion.

The compiler has added an article written for the "Religious Herald," by an Editor of the Presbyterian Church, a comrade of the deceased.—S. H.]

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From the South Western Baptist.

REV. N. D, RENFROE.

MESSRS. EDITORS: I have passed the saddest Christmas of my life, and how lonely and sorrowful the new year finds me! I have to perform the painful task of communicating to you the intelligence of the death of my only dear brother, N. D. RENFROE, who "was killed dead on the battle-field of Fredericksburg," the 13th ult.

N. D. Renfroe was born in Macon County, Ala., near the Montgomery line, about twenty-nine years ago, of poor, but worthy and respected parents. He was reared to habits of industry and labor, and was, in early youth, denied the privileges of school and the benefits of education; yet, he was home-taught the lessons of honesty, truthfulness and candor, for no parents ever strove with more care to implant these qualities in the *principles* and *habits* of their children than did his. He was always a quiet, steady boy. It seemed to be his very nature—even in childhood—to attend promptly to his own business, ignoring that of others; still he was ever kind and obliging.

In the year 1848, a gracious revival of religion prevailed in that part of Macon County where his father then resided. The churches under the pas-

torates of Elders J. R. Hand and A. N. Worthy, were abundantly blessed with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; these ministers then labored principally together in aid of each other. Great numbers were converted to Christ, and by them baptized into the fellowship of the churches. Among them, in his fifteenth year, was the subject of this letter, with two of his brothers and many of his youthful associates. He was baptized by Elder J. R. Hand, into the fellowship of Elizabeth Church, in the absence of Dr. Worthy, the pastor. And from that day to his death he "witnessed a good confession," "walking worthy of the vocation wherewith he was called," no man ever daring to charge aught against him. All who knew him will bear him testimony, that he "kept himself unspotted from the world," and so lived that "no man despised his youth."

In 1854 I became a head of a family and took him to my house—a poor, illiterate, but pious Christian youth—and placed him in Cedar Bluff Academy, Cherokee County, where he passed two years with great profit to himself and satisfaction to his friends. In the meantime he was licensed to preach, and often accompanied me to my churches and aided in the ministry of the Word, manifesting more than ordinary gifts, and commendable zeal in the cause of Christ. After this, I was enabled, with the assistance of good brethren, to sustain him four years in Union University, Tenn., where he proved himself an earnest and proficient student, and by application and industry, obtained a liberal education: failing to graduate,

however, by five months, being called from college by the pressing wants of a widowed step-mother, and orphan relatives to whom he felt it his duty to give immediate attention. While in college he preached often in the churches and destitute neighborhoods around Murfreesboro', and spent his vacations with the Churches in Cherokee, Calhoun and Talladega counties, Ala., where he was greatly useful in many meetings and revivals.

At the close of the year 1859—when he left college—he was invited to the pastorship of the Jacksonville church, was ordained to the full functions of the ministerial office, by Elders E. T. Smith, A. E. Van Devere and the writer. This relation he successfully maintained—being loved by his flock and respected by all—until in August, 1861, he volununteered in Capt. Bush's company on the eve of its starting to the seat of war in Virginia. This company forms a part of that gallant little 5th Alabama Battalion, in A. P. Hill's division, "which has nearly worn itself out fighting, and yet is but little noticed at home." The subject of this memoir met the duties of a private for four months with a fortitude and cheerful devotion common to soldiers fighting for liberty, not only complying with every demand upon himself, but frequently taking the place of the infirm and illy clad, when they were ordered on duty. The first vacancy that occurred he was elected Lieutenant almost unanimously, in which capacity he served until his fall.

A few days before the memorable battles in front

of Richmond, he left his company for the first time, and went to the city sick. When the news reached the city that those battles were about beginning, he arose, contrary to the advice of his physician, and hurried to the scene of strife, and failing to find his own battalion—its position having been changed in bivouacing the army for battle—he fell in with the 16th Ala. Regiment, and one of its companies being without a commissioned officer—its officers were absent sick—he offered them his services, and led the company through the terrible battle of Friday, when Colonel Woodward and so many good men of that regiment fell, displaying, in the most hazardous charges and under the most terrific fire, a coolness and efficiency that got him the praises of that company. Then, learning where his own company were, he went to them, and finding that one of their officers had been that day killed and another wounded, he took charge of them and commanded them to the end of those seven day's sanguinary strife, and marched back with them to Richmond. All this he did when, to use the words of his physician, "he ought to have been in bed." He then relapsed with Typhoid fever, and lay in the city at the point of death several weeks; but God raised him up, and when able to walk he came home and stayed a short time, until he was fit for service.

This prevented his participation in the hard marches and bloody battles of Cedar Run, 2d Manassas and Sharpsburg, but he got back to the army just as it returned to the Southside of the Potomac, by a walk

of one hundred miles, fully restored to health and ready for duty, and has had charge of the company most of the time since.

In a letter—the last he ever wrote me—speaking of the march to Fredericksburg, he says: "We have just completed another march of one hundred and seventy miles, crossing two awful mountains in the time. We were twelve days on the march. I had no wagon, or horse, or any other means of transportation, except my feet for myself and baggage; we rested only at night—rising at 4½ in the morning and marching until sunset. I suffered much—frequently thinking that I would fall out and rest, but when I would look through the company and see several men barefooted and still keeping up, it would stimulate me, and I would press on. The tramp finished my boots, and both my feet are on the ground, and but little prospect of getting any shoes soon. But it is my duty to bear a little hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and I submit to it cheerfully and without a murmur in view of my country's freedom and the honor of my religion. We are certainly on the eve of a great battle here—it will be a grand affair—I may not survive the conflict, but, brother, if I die, I shall fall at my post, and I am ready to go."

Yes, indeed, it "was a grand affair" to him! He did not "survive the conflict," but he was "ready to go!" He said, "I shall die at my post" Lieutenant Mattison, of the same company, in a letter after his death, said: "He died at his post as a brave and

Christian soldier, for a braver and better man has not fallen in the Confederate army."

In his letters he often expressed the greatest confidence in his preparation to meet death. At the end of a long march last Spring, he said: "I am 'wayworn and weary!' O how sweet amid such toil and excitement to look beyond these scenes of busy wo and strife, and contemplate the 'Saint's Everlasting Rest.'" Then he quoted the lines:

"Here in the body pent,
Absent from heaven I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home.

Nearer home! Nearer home!
However dark and lonely
The path through which I roam;
This is a journey only,
And though I oft, affrighted,
Shrink back with sigh and moan,
My campfire still is lighted
A day's march nearer home!"

In another letter he says: "And now, my brother, I have some reason to fear that you have not prepared yourself to meet the news of such a fate as may befal me. I know you feel lonely without me. It seems to me that if you should die first the world would be without interest to me. But I have entered the army to fight for you, and, if need be, to die for you and yours. Let us be prepared for the worst—nay, rather for the best, for, though life is sweet, *Heaven is infinitely sweeter!* I am willing to

go when God calls, and I am willing he shall call me in any way that he pleases."

The last words he ever said to me, as he held my hand with the affectionate farewell grip, a few weeks ago at the Talladega depot: "Well, brother, now we part, and unless you visit the army soon, we will not meet again on earth; but shed no tears for me—we will meet in heaven." How often have these words flashed through my memory, and carried solemn music deep into my soul! O that joyous meeting in heaven! Thank God for the hope of heaven!

His last day's work. He had offered up fervent prayer to God, and with the dawn of day the battle opened. He stood and acted his part manfully nearly to the close of the terrific scene. His Captain was wounded in the early part of the day; after this the command of the company devolved upon him until his fall. About three o'clock in the afternoon three regiments of his brigade gave way and retired, leaving a gap through which the enemy was moving rapidly to flank their position. Gen. Archer threw the Battallion and first Tennessee regiment—who alone remained in the battle at that point—into the breech to hold the enemy in check until another brigade could be brought up. The enemy rushed on and were too strong. An order came to retreat. It is supposed by his comrades that brother did not hear the order. The first Tennessee retreated, and the battallion retreated, except a few of his company who stood by him. The enemy coming up within a few steps ordered a surrender. He turned to his few

men, with a gentle smile, and said: "Boys, this is a pretty hot place, and you must get out the best you can." Then turning to the enemy with his Repeater in hand he began to fire, and was unhurt, and firing his piece with cool deliberation. when his "boys" left him! And here he was found dead. No friend saw him die. I do not say that he acted with the best discretion, but I do claim for him that, in the last moments he stood *alone* on that part of the field of carnage with his face to the enemy giving him battle.*

"Coward's die a thousand deaths!
Brave men die but one,
And conquer, though they die!"

His intimate friend, Lieut. Mattison, brought his remains home. He reached my house the first day of the new year—Oh, what a sad new year's day! I gathered my family around the cold and lifeless form of one that we loved as dearly as life itself, and allowed my little children to shed a tear upon the face of an Uncle who had so often presented them to that God at whose feet he lived, and who finally died for them. And on the 2d inst., after religious services, led by Elder E. T. Smith, who long stood side by side with him in the army, he was buried with the "honors of war" in the Talladega cemetery. "Turn from him that he may rest" till the morn of the resurrection, when he will come forth in the glorified image of the Son of God.

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*I state this upon the authority of his comrades.

Yet I feel sad and lonely. Only a few years ago there were five brcthers of us, and now I am left alone. When the others passed away my heart drew uearer this one. I loved with more than a brother's love: he was to me a brother and a son. He never acted contrary to my wishes in anything, and yet I always felt that in many things he was capable of advising me. From the day he joined the church I never knew him to do a thing that I could censure. In the family he was beloved. It may be safely said that he never boarded in a family but what gave him up reluctantly when he left, and he boarded in many. In school he was loved by his class-mates and honored by the Faculty. In social life he was a young man of few and prudent words. I question whether any one can refer to a single impropriety in all his religious life. In private life he was a man of study and of much prayer. In the cause of Christ he was faithful and zealous, but his zeal was tempered with more than an ordinary degree of modesty. In the pulpit he was clear and gifted. He loved the Sabbath school and the prayer meeting.

As a soldier, he was universally beloved by his comrades. He was properly impressed with the importance of the questions at issue, and there he was determined to

"Be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate."

He preached to the soldiers as often as other duties and circumstances would allow, and lived up to his religion himself. One of his fellow-soldiers, in a let-

ter to me last summer, said, "Your brother is a living, walking example of Christianity amongst us.—He knows how to perform his duties as an officer without conflicting with his religion. He is ready at any and all times to get on his knees to pray for the sick soldier, and has a word of comfort and encouragement for all. His example is a standing admonition and a constant finger board pointing out the road to heaven."

Another officer in his company says, "His example was worth more to us than the public preaching of a dozen chaplains."

And yet, O dear "Crockett," thou art gone for the present! How cruel is death! But God is just and merciful. "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight," and I cheerfully submit, with an humble confidence that the blow which has cast a pall of sorrow over my heart will drive me closer his bosom of love. Earth has lost one of its strongest ties to me, and heaven has gained an additional attraction!

From the Religious Herald.

REV. N. D. RENFROE.

SIRS: Permit us, through your paper, to pay a last sad tribute to the virtues of a young minister, who fell in the recent battle of Fredericksburg, a martyr in the cause of our country. We have known

the fallen hero long and well, and loved him as a man and a Christian.

Nathaniel D. Renfroe, after a course of theological study in Tennessee, returned to Alabama about four years ago, and as a licensed preacher, took charge of a Baptist congregation in Jacksonville. He was remarkable for his studious habits and orderly walk, and above all, for his humble and unostentatious piety. But a youth, he soon won the confidence and respect of the community, and was esteemed as a model for young clergymen, and an example for older men.

We shall never forget the solemn and impressive scene of his ordination. In a neat and tasteful church, in that rural village, located in a beautiful and smiling valley, the congregation had assembled on Sabbath morning to join in the worship of God, and the consecration of their beloved young pastor. The spacious church was filled to overflowing with earnest, attentive people, who listened enwrapped to the able and thrilling ordination sermon. At the close an elder brother of the young candidate, who had long been in the service of his Master, descended from the pulpit to conduct the solemn rites. It was a most touching scene. With eyes full of tears, and the deep, solemn tones of a voice trembling with emotion, he examined his brother, administered the vows, welcomed him into the great work, and charged him as to its sacred duties and august responsibilities. His manner united the affection of a father with the tenderness of a mother, and his very

heart-strings seemed to vibrate as he poured forth fervent prayer to God to bless the ordination and sustain the youthful minister in the arduous duties of his holy vocation. The scene carried one back to the days when some stalwart knight administered the vows to his stripling brother, and harnessing him in the panoply of war, sent him forth to battle for the Holy Land.

Earnestly and bravely did the young minister devote himself to his calling—reproving wickedness in all forms and places, instructing the young and the ignorant, comforting the afflicted, and teaching the great truths of everlasting life. Manfully he battled against sin and iniquity, while he tenderly led the weak and stumbling. Of him it might be truly said, he pointed his flock to heaven and led the way.

A year passed and a new scene of strife awaited the young Christian warrior. Our country was invaded, our liberties assailed and our homes and firesides were desecrated; society upheaved, and the great interests of civilization and religion were all about to be buried in the ruins. The South called upon all her sons to rush to the rescue. The young minister felt that he too was called upon to defend his country against the ruthless invaders. He consulted with his congregation, and with his ministerial brethren. What agony of mind he suffered between conflicting duties; how often he went to God in fervent prayer for light and strength, may not be told!

But the young minister soon laid his aside clerical robes and bade adieu to his weeping congregation—to fathers he had so often instructed in the duties of reli-

gion—to mothers he had consoled in afflictions—and to the little children, that he had gathered weekly around him at the Sabbath school. He shouldered his musket and hied him to the battle-field to defend that government that could alone secure his people the right to worship God according to the dictates of conscience.

In the camp, on the march, around the bivouac fire, or on post, young Renfroe discharged his duties as faithfully and zealously as he had in the pulpit or at the Sabbath school. Fearless in the battle-field, he was not afraid to frown vice in the camp, and exemplified beautifully the true character of the Christian soldier. Modest and unassuming, he influenced others more by his good example and amiable manners than by obtrusive advice or reproof. He was truly as brave as a lion, yet gentle as a woman.

He soon gained the confidence of all around him; and the first vacancy that occurred among the officers of his company, his wild young companions chose the Christian soldier as a leader in the hour of danger and amid the perils of the battle-field. In common with his companions in arms, Lieutenant Renfroe went through many privations, his company taking part in several of the most fiercely contested battles that have been fought during this eventful year. Through all he maintained his exemplary deportment and lovely Christian character.

In the progress of the war, the invader again marshaled his hosts and came down to pillage and slaughter. The din of the conflict at Fredericksburg

found young Renfroe at his post. * * * But the stormy day of battle has passed. The surging hosts that swayed to and fro through that awful amphitheatre of blood and carnage, from morning till night, amid the roar of artillery, hissing shot and shrieking shells, have ceased their strife. All have sunk down—

"The weary to rest and the wounded to die."

Alone, yet not all alone, a young hero lies in the dark wood, pierced with a death wound. His life-blood is ebbing slowly away, and no friend near to staunch it, no kind hand to cool his parching thirst with a drop of water. It is the young minister.—Where now is that devoted flock that used to gather around him to catch his words of kindness, or follow his accents of prayer? Far, far away in Alabama. Perhaps they pray for him, looking with joyful anticipation to the time when he shall return and again go in and out before them, and teach them the ways of righteousness. Alone with his God, while the bright stars gleamed from above, and angels looked down from heaven, the Christian hero breathed out his spirit in prayer for his people and his country.

Sabbath morning breaks, bright and beautiful, over the lovely vale in Alabama. The Sabbath-bell peals forth through the peaceful village, and wakes echoes from the neighboring mountains. The innocent and prattling children gather at the sanctuary to unite their tender voices in praises to God, and their young hearts in prayer for the safe return of their minister. But where is he? Stiff and stark in death he lies on the heights above the ravaged city, the purest and most spotless sacrifice offered on the altar of liberty.

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